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Greece

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FAQs about Pesticide MRLs

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Report Highlights:

The following report is the reply from FAS Athens to the questionnaire circulated by FAS Horticultural and Tropical Products Division in May 2004 about Maximum Residue Levels (MRL) of pesticides in foodstuffs.

Includes PSD Changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: No
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The following report is the reply from FAS Athens to the questionnaire circulated by FAS Horticultural and Tropical Products Division in May 2004 about Maximum Residue Levels (MRL) of pesticides in foodstuffs.

1. Which government agencies are involved in MRL establishment and what are their responsibilities?

Most MRLs are set at the EU level. At the Member State level, the Greek Ministry of Food and Agricultural Development, Plant Protection Division monitors, enforces and is responsible for "risk assessments" of MRLs on fresh, unprocessed products as well as dairy and livestock products (food of animal origin). Processed products are monitored and enforced by the Food Control Authority, EFET.

2. What laws and regulations guide the development and enforcement of MRLs for pesticides?

The EU Directive pertaining to the determination of the Maximum Residual Levels for pesticides that are used in fruit and vegetables is **90/642/EU**.

The EU Directive pertaining to the determination of the Maximum Residual Levels for pesticides used in grain is **86/362/EU**.

The EU Directive pertaining to MRL presence in food of animal origin, is **86/363/EU**.

All Directives above include a special annex, in which MRLs are listed for pesticides that are used in fruit and vegetables, grain and food of animal origin, respectively. There are about 60 active ingredients listed, out of 400 existing in Europe. An EU-wide Regulation with almost all active ingredients (approximately 1,008) will be implemented by 2006. Those MRLs not covered by the EU Regulations currently in effect, are covered by the national legislation (National Law No. 721/1977). This National Law was the main authority up until 2002. In addition, WHO CODEX MRLs have also been used.

Recently, the EU has made some amendments to the annex, which cites MRLs for pesticides used, to all the above products. The most recent Regulations are the **2000/24/EU** and the **2002/63/EU**, which complete the Annex. The 2002/63/EU also imposes formal sample controls for the inspection of pesticide residuals in all products mentioned above. Greece is fully harmonized with these recent Regulations.

The EU Technical Residue working group produces the relevant directives, which later become Member State legislation. Greece is gradually fully harmonizing with and setting its pesticide tolerances according to the above Regulations. EU established MRLs prevails over the national MRL levels.

The MRL list for the above products is available at the EU site: www.europa.eu.int

3. What is the process for the establishment of MRLs?

A company submits eight experiments on chemical residues providing detailed uses, toxicology, environmental impact, etc. for each active ingredient and the crop on which it is used. These experiments are specific to a certain European bio climatic zone. The EU assigns this company application to a Rapporteur (MS) country. The Rapporteur country reviews the results and proceeds with risk assessment studies. After this procedure, an EU Regulation is

prepared. For Greece, the Ministry of Agriculture, Plant Protection Division submits such results to the Rapporteur country for review.

4. How frequently is the printed copy or website listing of MRLs updated?

The EU site is updated every 6 months. There is no Greek web site on MRLs. Updates are not regularly made available publicly, but are available upon request.

5. Is there a defined regulatory process for the establishment of import MRLs?

National MRL levels are accepted and applied for each country. There is not yet a regulatory process for import MRLs, but one is under preparation at the EU level. Only random controls take place on imports. According to GOG and Trade sources, MRLs are an issue, which is urgently examined, and will be solved at EU level. Hopefully by the year 2006, a common EU Regulation for all EU members will be implemented. There are presently estimated to be about 1008 active ingredients with established or pending MRLs.

6. What residues of pesticides define the MRL? That is, is only the parent chemical measured or are specific metabolites included?

Generally, the MRL is measured depending on the active ingredient. As regards the metabolites, if they are of toxicological significance, then they are analyzed for MRLs.

7. Are MRLs established for crop groups, individual crops or both?

From 2004-2006 the WHO and the EU regulations are the legislation in effect. The 2006 EU Regulation, under preparation, will establish MRLs on an individual crop basis.

8. Does your country have a routine surveillance/testing program for pesticide residues in imported foods? If so, please describe it, i.e., number of samples tested, how priorities are identified, are results made available, sampling and testing procedures, etc.

Tests take place on a random basis in laboratories assigned by the Greek Ministry of Agriculture, for both imported and domestically produced food products. In Greece, controls take place by nine regional Ministry of Agriculture posts around the country, the so-called "KEPYELS" (Regional Control Centers). About 2,500-3,000 samples per year are taken by these centers and tested by the assigned laboratories. To date, according to our sources by Agricultural Chemical companies in Greece, MRLs were discovered to be in excess in less than 3% of these samples.

9. Does your country accept Codex MRLs? If not, do Codex MRLs play any role?

Yes, Greece accepts the WHO Codex International List.

10. What actions are taken when residues are found above the MRL?

Products are withdrawn from the market, confiscated and destroyed, or in the case of imports, re-exported to the country of origin.

11. Are there default pesticide enforcement levels? What are they?

None reported. Penalties are administrative, but no fines are imposed by the legislation in effect.

12. Greek Government contacts:

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